

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listing of claims in the above-referenced application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of answering a question [based on information stored on a computer-readable medium] comprising the steps of

receiving a question;

parsing the question to obtain an analyzed question;

matching the analyzed question to a set of predetermined question patterns to obtain one or more matched question patterns;

transforming the one or more matched question patterns into one or more partially unspecified statements, said transforming including matching each of the matched question patterns to a set of predetermined transformations corresponding to said one or more partially unspecified statements, wherein each of the partially unspecified statements is missing a portion corresponding to an answer and said predetermined transformations describe syntactic variations of one or more terms included in the question;

generating partially unspecified queries corresponding to the partially unspecified statements; and

obtaining answers by matching the partially unspecified queries to stored information.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the transforming step further comprises:

transforming matched question patterns into one or more partially unspecified statements using syntactic frames.
3. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

collecting answers from matching the partially unspecified queries across a plurality of documents in the stored information.
4. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

ranking each obtained answer according to its frequency of matching.
5. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the stored information comprises a set of documents and an index identifying which documents within the set of documents contain terms or groups of terms answering the partially unspecified queries.
6. – 31 (Cancelled)

32. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein said partially unspecified statements include at least one syntactic or morphological restriction.

33. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein generating said partially unspecified queries further includes:

replacing a generic syntactic or morphological category with one or more corresponding elements from the question.

34. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein a first of said partially unspecified statements is transformed into more than one partially unspecified queries in accordance with a mapping of a question word to more than one corresponding partially unspecified term.

35. (New) A method of answering a question comprising the steps of

- receiving a question;
- parsing the question to obtain an analyzed question;
- matching the analyzed question to a set of predetermined question patterns to obtain one or more matched question patterns;
- transforming the one or more matched question patterns into one or more partially unspecified statements, said transforming including matching each of the matched question patterns to a set of predetermined transformations corresponding to said one or more partially unspecified statements, wherein each of the partially unspecified statements is missing a portion corresponding to an answer and said predetermined transformations represent affirmative statement patterns corresponding to said one or more matched question patterns;
- generating partially unspecified queries corresponding to the partially unspecified statements; and
- obtaining answers by matching the partially unspecified queries to stored information.

36. (New) The method of Claim 35, wherein said partially unspecified statements include at least one syntactic or morphological restriction.

37. (New) A computer program product for answering a question comprising code that:

receives a question;

parses the question to obtain an analyzed question;

matches the analyzed question to a set of predetermined question patterns to obtain one or more matched question patterns;

transforms the one or more matched question patterns into one or more partially unspecified statements, said code that transforms including code that matches each of the matched question patterns to a set of predetermined transformations corresponding to said one or more partially unspecified statements, wherein each of the partially unspecified statements is missing a portion corresponding to an answer and said predetermined transformations describe syntactic variations of one or more terms included in the question;

generates partially unspecified queries corresponding to the partially unspecified statements; and

obtains answers by matching the partially unspecified queries to stored information.

38. (New) The computer program product of claim 37, wherein the code that transforms the one or more matched question patterns into one or more partially unspecified statements, further comprises:

code that transforms matched question patterns into one or more partially unspecified statements using syntactic frames.

39. (New) The computer program product of claim 37, further code that:
collects answers from matching the partially unspecified queries across a plurality of documents in the stored information.

40. (New) The computer program product of claim 37, further comprising code that:
ranks each obtained answer according to its frequency of matching.

41. (New) The computer program product of claim 37, wherein the stored information comprises a set of documents and an index identifying which documents within the set of documents contain terms or groups of terms answering the partially unspecified queries.

42. (New) The computer program product of Claim 37, wherein said partially unspecified statements include at least one syntactic or morphological restriction.

43. (New) The computer program product of Claim 37, wherein said code that generates said partially unspecified queries further includes code that:
replaces a generic syntactic or morphological category with one or more corresponding elements from the question.

44. (New) The computer program product of Claim 37, wherein a first of said partially unspecified statements is transformed into more than one partially unspecified queries in accordance with a mapping of a question word to more than one corresponding partially unspecified term.

45. (New) A computer program product for answering a question based on information stored on a computer-readable medium comprising code that:

receives a question;

parses the question to obtain an analyzed question;

matches the analyzed question to a set of predetermined question patterns to obtain one or more matched question patterns;

transforms the one or more matched question patterns into one or more partially unspecified statements, said code that transforms including code that matches each of the matched question patterns to a set of predetermined transformations corresponding to said one or more partially unspecified statements, wherein each of the partially unspecified statements is missing a portion corresponding to an answer and said predetermined transformations are affirmative statement patterns corresponding to said one or more matched question patterns;

generates partially unspecified queries corresponding to the partially unspecified statements; and

obtains answers by matching the partially unspecified queries to stored information.

46. (New) The computer program product of Claim 45, wherein said partially unspecified statements include at least one syntactic or morphological restriction.